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ABSTRACT

This book describes the crucial role missionaries played in the acculturation and "Americanization" of the Cherokee Indians from 1789 to 1839. The book compares the methods, successes, and failures of the Moravians, Presbyterians, Congegrationalists, Baptists, and Methodists in their attempts to Christianize the Cherokees. Each missionary society had its own explanations of Christian theology, and forms and styles of Christian ritual and worship. Missionaries also differed in regional attitudes and political outlooks on such matters as slavery. Missionary schools taught the Cherokees vocational skills, how to read and write English, and how to count and measure. The book discusses the cultural transformation of the Cherokee people in terms of economics, familial roles and kinship, social and ethical orientation, politics, religion, and the shift from an oral to a written tradition. In addition to the Cherokees' own selective adaptations to White culture, the book explores how White culture itself changed during its struggle with the Indians. After 1828, most missionaries found it difficult to defend the policies of their government, which called for the removal of American Indian societies. They discovered that Cherokee civil society was more stable, orderly, just, and concerned for the general welfare than most of the surrounding White settlements and frontier state governments. The book focuses on major events affecting Cherokee acculturation and religious revitalization, including war, tribal division, cultural disruption, and defeat; Cherokee rebirth as farmers, herders, and traders; Cherokee renaissance and nationalistic fervor; and the Cherokee fight for national survival in the East. Includes a bibliography and an index. (LP)

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